

in many ways ordinary people, were inordinately wise in the ways of social change and the frailties of human nature. And they knew that the Union would never be perfect but could always be made more perfect.

They knew that we would never fully realize the ideals of the Constitution and the Declaration or the Bill of Rights but that we could always deepen the meaning of freedom, widen the circle of opportunity, and strengthen the bonds of our community. That is what these young immigrants represent today, our future and our steadfast belief that we grow stronger with our diversity in a global world, as long as we reaffirm our common humanity and our common fidelity to the freedom and values of the Constitution.

Now, my fellow Americans, about 4 months from now I will change jobs, and I will be restored to a title that Harry Truman once said was the most important title any American could have, that of citizen. No American citizen in this Republic's history has been more fortunate or more blessed. I hope for the rest of my life I can do a good job with that title. I hope all these young, new citizens behind me will realize that President Truman was right. As important as our Presidents are, as important as our Congresses are, as important as our judges are and our Governors and our mayors, our philanthropists, our artists, our athletes, this country is great because there are good people who get up every day and do their very best to live their dreams and make the most of their own lives and because this country has a system enshrined in the Constitution that gives them the maximum opportunity to do just that.

You should be very proud of what you are doing here today to make sure everyone knows why America is a special place and being an American is a great gift.

I thank you for that. *[Applause]* Thank you.

Now, we're just about done, but I'm going to ask one of our citizens, Susan Yuh, who was born in South Korea, to join me in signing, as everyone else has already done, this steel beam to my right, that will be the founding pillar of a building devoted to our Constitution. I think it's quite fitting that the beam should have the signature of a Presi-

dent, and even more fitting that it should have the signature of a new citizen on her first day as an American.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:17 p.m. on Independence Mall. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor John F. Street and former Mayor Edward G. Rendell of Philadelphia; John C. Bogle, chairman, and Joseph M. Torsella, president and chief executive officer, National Constitution Center; James T. Giles, Chief Judge, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania; Edward R. Becker III, Chief Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit; Marie Rust, Regional Director, Northeast Region, National Park Service; Judith Rodin, president, University of Pennsylvania; and Walter H. Annenberg and his wife, Lee, founders, Annenberg Foundation.

Proclamation 7343—Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, 2000

September 17, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In the spring of 1787, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and other prominent leaders gathered once again in Philadelphia to offset a looming crisis in the life of our young democracy. The Articles of Confederation, a blueprint for government that they had hammered out in the Second Continental Congress in 1777, had proved too weak and ineffective to achieve a balance of power between the new Federal Government and the States. Rising to this fresh challenge, our founders crafted a new charter of government—the United States Constitution—that has proven to be a masterpiece of political philosophy.

Wise about human nature and wary of unlimited power, the authors of our Constitution created a government where power resides not with one person or institution but with three separate and equal branches of government. It guarantees for our citizens the right and responsibility to choose leaders through free elections, giving Americans the means to enact political change without resorting to violence, insurrection, or revolution. And, with its carefully crafted system

of checks and balances, the Bill of Rights, and its process of amendment, the Constitution maintains an inspired balance between authority and freedom and between the ideals of unity and individual rights.

For more than 200 years the Constitution has provided our Nation with the resilience to survive trying times and the flexibility to correct past injustices. At every turning point in our history, the letter and spirit of the Constitution have enabled us to reaffirm our union and expand the meaning of liberty. Its success can be measured by the millions of people who have left their homelands over the past two centuries to become American citizens. Its influence can be measured by the number and vigor of new democracies springing up across the globe.

In giving us the Constitution, our founders also gave us a powerful example of citizenship. They were deeply involved in governing our Nation and passionately committed to improving our society. The rights we sometimes take for granted today were secured by their courage and by the blood of patriots during the Revolutionary War. As we observe Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, let us remember that with the many gifts bestowed on us by the Constitution comes the responsibility to be informed and engaged citizens; to take an active role in the civic life of our communities and our country; and to uphold the ideals of unity and liberty that have sustained us since our earliest days as a Nation.

In commemoration of the signing of the Constitution and in recognition of the importance of active, responsible citizenship in preserving the Constitution's blessings for our Nation, the Congress, by joint resolution of February 29, 1952 (36 U.S.C. 106), designated September 17 as "Citizenship Day," and by joint resolution of August 2, 1956 (36 U.S.C. 108), requested that the President proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 of each year as "Constitution Week."

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 17, 2000, as Citizenship Day and September 17 through September 23, 2000, as Constitution Week. I call upon Federal, State, and local officials,

as well as leaders of civic, educational, and religious organizations, to conduct meaningful ceremonies and programs in our schools, houses of worship, and other community centers to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the Constitution and the rights and duties of citizenship. I also call on all citizens to rededicate themselves to the principles of the Constitution.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:18 a.m., September 18, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on September 19.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India

September 17, 2000

And Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of the American people, let me welcome you again to the White House, along with all your party from India.

I hope that in your time with us, we have at least come close to repaying the warm hospitality with which you and the Indian people greeted me, my family, and our fellow Americans on my visit in March.

One of the most remarkable things to me about our relationship is its scope and its increasing interdependence. There are hundreds of American businesses, foundations, and universities with long commitments to India. When Americans call Microsoft for customer support today, they're as likely to be talking to someone in Bangalore or Hyderabad as to someone in Seattle.

There are more than one million Indians here in America now, and I think more than half of them are here tonight. *[Laughter]* And I might say, Prime Minister, the other half are disappointed that they're not here. *[Laughter]*

Indian-Americans now run more than 750 companies in Silicon Valley alone. In India,